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State's forest products industry improves during third quarter, UM researcher says

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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

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STATE'S FOREST PRODUCTS INDUSTRY IMPROVES DURING THIRD QUARTER, UM RESEARCHER SAYS

MISSOULA --

Third quarter employment, payrolls and production for Montana's forest products industry showed considerable improvement over the first two quarters of 1991, which were affected by the recession, reports The University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research.

In cooperation with the Montana Wood Products Association, the bureau compiled the quarterly figures of 29 plants that produce more than 90 percent of the state's wood and paper products.

Charles Keegan, director of the bureau's forest industry research, says the second quarter of 1991 ended with a brief period of high prices caused by panic over a modest increase in demand, a court decision suspending logging in some West Coast spotted owl habitats, and wet weather that limited logging in parts of the Southeast.

"The very high prices in late June and early July did not continue through the third quarter of 1991, but prices in August and September remained above those seen in the first four months of 1991," Keegan says. "As a result of better prices, a number of mills that had been curtailed through the first half of the year resumed normal operations."

Third quarter 1991 lumber production was 378 million board feet,

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Third.rl -- 2

up from the 353 million board feet produced in the second quarter and 319 million board feet in the first quarter of 1991, Keegan says.

Plywood production in the third quarter of 1991 was 175 million square feet, up from 134 million square feet in the second quarter and 129 million square in the first quarter of 1991, he says.

Production employment in Montana's forest products industry during the third quarter of 1991 was 4,469 workers, up from 4,164 in the second quarter and 3,883 in the first quarter of 1991, Keegan says.

Production workers' wages were \$33.5 million during the third quarter of 1991, a \$3.8 million increase over the second quarter of 1991, he says.

Keegan expects fourth quarter 1991 production to be down somewhat from the third quarter because a number of mills have announced curtailments due to limited timber supply.

"That will make 1991 one of the lowest production years since the poor market years of the early 1980s," Keegan says.

The figures refer only to production workers at sawmills, plywood plants, pulp and paper mills, particleboard and fiberboard plants, and utility pole plants. These production workers account for about half the workers in Montana's forest products industry. Estimates do not include the several thousand workers in logging, trucking and other related jobs.

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